Dweb Cascadia 2025 Retrospective

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Overview

DWeb Camp Cascadia 2025 was its first regional DWeb camp, held between August 8-10 on Salt Spring Island, BC, Canada. Participants were solicited to respond to an anonymous survey form and to attend a virtual retrospective. Around 20 people overall engaged with either or both feedback channels. The feedback session created a Miro board of notes and thoughts. All feedback is organized below under thematic insight headers.

What went well

Location

Participants shared that the venue was "top notch," being grateful for the good weather and the chance to be outside. The food team got particular shout outs as having "nailed it, adapting to crises and making beautiful food."

Size

Participants were grateful for the intimate size of the event, which "made it easier to commit to the group and social cohesion."

Vibes

DWeb Cascadia met participant expectations for a regional DWeb Camp: familiar, unique, cozy. Participants particularly highlighted it as a chance for "fertile social collisions," appreciating the opening, and the stickers.

Program

Participants raved about the programing, particularly its breadth and diversity, with fun moments like making music, going on field trips and the dance party particularly highlighted. Participants enjoyed having guest speakers from outside the DWeb world and local participation from Salt Spring Island. One participant appreciated not many things happening at the same time.

Participation

DWeb participants noted that many "ended up contributing and participating," citing examples of people helping each other out, such as with rides and the camp gear share.

Pain Points

Location

Participants reflected that some sessions seemed to have fewer participants because they weren't on the "nice shady lawn." There was also a wifi gap around the demo booths.

Attendees

Representation was low from locals and indigenous folks.

Program

Some participants found friction in not having enough small group discussion, enough mingling time, and enough movement and games.

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Spaciousness

Many participants noted the time feeling cramped. One disliked the unconference and tours happening at the same time.

Coordination

Participants cited a number of coordination challenges during their time, including:

- Having too much and inefficient communication (i.e. broad communication on small details) in the lead-up.
- Build day and arrival feeling uncoordinated and a bit stressful.
- Organization with vendors feeling "chaotic."
- The organizer being unable to attend last-minute caused stress, particularly a miscommunication about the existence and location of a number of protocol documents.
- Lack of clarity about schedule changes and who to ask about it.
- One person missed breakfast due to not knowing when it ended.
- Blocks to how to contribute to organizing (i.e. organizers felt like an in-group, lack of transparency in operations, lack of explicit participatory enculturation).

Ideas for the future

Attendees

- Scholarships for less advantaged attendees.
- Invitations and outreach to more folk doing other types of tech (hardware).
- Towards bringing in more "normies" (non-DWeb), can Dweb represent itself, like a track or camp, at a bigger festival?

Spaciousness

- Could be 1 day longer.
- 45 minute sessions for unconference, not 30, with more transition time.
- More generous checkout time for teardown on last day.
- More time for focused discussion and mingling.

Coordination

- Volunteer signup more in advance so less reminding attendees needed.
- More coordination around takedown team task/sign ups.
- More redundancies in individual organizer capabilities.
- Find a local chef on the island to provide catering.
- Create basic protocol for how dWeb camp takes place that is accessible, transparent, with clear methods for suggesting changes and engaging as an organizer.
- Make advance communications efficient & targeted.
- Higher baseline level of structure.
- There were no Code of Conduct violations, but it should have been more upfront and visible.

Connections

- Making use of more "Dweb adherent" tools, including practicing dweb principles and ethos
- Support attendees to continue to build connections afterwards.

Co-creation

- Building something within and with the community, like crafts or a structure that could be left behind.
- Could have a hack day/afternoon.

Creativity & Care

- More structured fun and creative activities (art, music, exercise).
- Inviting artists and musicians, giving them stipend to participate.
- More activities inside at night, like a board game night.
- Dedicated corners for decompressing.
- Having a theme to the gathering.

Attendees' Takeaways

While some participants highlighted above the desire for additional coordination, other participants cautioned against much more planning as putting at risk the emergent quality of the community.

Overall, attendees were impressed with the gathering, particularly the engagedness and intentionality of the community that emerged. Participants deeply valued the chance to connect with others, both those who are also working on values-based tech and with locals, and particularly in a real life and outdoors setting.

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